



Media relations – simple tips

Media relations can be seen as a pretty scary part of the work of a football club. Stories of getting 'shafted' by the media are out there: Misquotes, photocalls that went wrong (Neil Kinnock falling into the sea).

The best way to deal with this is to follow some simple rules, laid out below:

1. Don't let everyone be a media officer It is a specific skill set that is required, and not everyone is going to be good at it, so make sure that you think carefully about who does the job. Ensure that everyone knows who the media officer is, and that you restrict the right to officially comment to a small number of people who are well briefed.
2. Social media IS media The old barriers have gone: Comment on Twitter, Facebook or any other channel that has public exposure is the same as being quoted in a newspaper, on the telly or radio. The advantage is that you can control more easily what you say, so use it to your advantage.
3. Maintain good relations Try and establish good relationships with your local journalists, bloggers, reporters, etc. Most media work is based on relationships. Even if they're being critical you should try to maintain good relations. But that doesn't mean you should let them walk all over you.
4. Enjoy the silence Don't keep speaking – the more you speak, the more you leave yourself open to misinterpretation. There are points in a conversation or interview with a journalist where there is a pause where there is nothing more to say. When that pause comes, don't fill it with anything. Let the journalist speak next
5. Write down what you plan to say – and 'have a plan' Don't rely on the power of recall. You should have your 'key messages' written down anyway, so always carry a copy and ensure you remember them. They're a useful reference point. If you're not sure how to do this, create a strategy that lays out clearly what you're trying to do and achieve – whether it's about the actual football on the pitch, or the wider aims of the football clubs. Use the SD document at the end of this guide.
6. Consider your response (on the phone, in person, on an email) Don't feel that you have to respond to the deadline of the journalist: They will almost always want the story yesterday. That's understandable, as they're often very harried and rushed – especially these days where they often have to multitask across lots of different formats (video, audio, written word). If you think it's possible, or you're too rushed at that moment, don't just spit out a comment: Ask them for their questions in written form.
7. If you feel you can, offer to fact-check your answers for them You have to be sensitive to the right of a journalist to be able to take your quotes and create the story, and if you've made a drastic mistake and given them something you shouldn't have, then you should be reading 1, 2 and 3 first.
8. Understand that (most) journalists are human beings too Don't treat them like spare parts, but don't worship them: you have the right to be spoken to respectfully, to be able to decline to comment; they ought to be respected as they're people who can get your story out, but they are not your mouthpiece so realise that sometimes they might say things you don't like.